The Shepherd,

Or The

PASTORAL CHARGE

And

OBEDIENCE due to it;

Instituted

By God as a necessary means to preserve the *Sheep* from Straying.

LONDON,

Printed for *Timothy Garthwait*,

1668.

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A SERMON

Preached before His Majesty at *Whitehall, March* 9. 1661.

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1 PET. 2. 25.

For ye were as sheep going astray, but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your Souls.

THE condition of those in the Text, both for what they had been once, and for what they now were, that is, for their *straying* and *returning* again, looks so like our case of late, (who, if ever any, had err'd and stray'd from all the ways of duty both to God and man, but are now happily returned to the Shepherds and Bishops of our Souls) you may perhaps imagine this Text to be chosen of purpose to pursue those two *Blown Arguments*.

And therefore before I proceed farther, it will be necessary to deliver you from those thoughts, and perhaps that fear. For though the mischiefs in the one, and Blessings in the other be such, as deserve never to be forgotten; yet possibly may not endure a perpetual importunate Remembrancer.

And the truth is, the very words and phrase of the text, which only at the first blush carries us upon those thoughts, will leave us, if we look a little nearer to them. For the Straying here will prove to be of another kind, and the Return will be found to be to another Bishop. The straying here was of such as had err'd like *Sheep*, whereas ours had little or nothing of the Sheep in it, save the Sheeps clothing; for dress'd up they were with pretenses as soft as wool, *Gods glory*, *Purity of worship*, *Christian liberty*, nothing worse then these, and so indeed they err'd like Sheep, as if they had been such; but the truth is, it was liker the ranging of Wolves, tearing and devouring, then the straying of weak and silly Sheep. And for the returning likewise here, though it was to a Bishop, yet I dare not be so bold with him that bears that name in the text, directly to apply it to our Bishops, nor advance our return to this. The

The Biſhop here was no doubt our bleſſed *Lord* and Saviour, whom God himſelf had conſecrated and ordained to that office; but our Biſhops are not otherwiſe concerned here then as they can make their title from and under him; but if that may be done hereafter, I truſt you will not be againſt it. In the mean time, if there were no more in it, me thinks this ſhould be enough to reconcile the *Presbyterians* to the name of a *Biſhop*, which our Saviour himſelf hath vouchſafed to take upon him. But having laid aſide that argument, which the words at firſt ſight ſeem'd to offer, I beſpeak your attention to one of a more common intereſt, which concerns all that would be Chriſtians, whoſe character it is. Who from the ways of ſin and error, are return'd to the faith and obedience of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who to reduce us from thoſe ways hath taken upon him to be our Shepherd and Biſhop.

The main point is, *That God of his mercy complying with the neceſſities and infirmities of nature, hath erected an* Office *of truſt and confidence in his Church, under the quality of a Shepherd and Biſhop, to direct and guide us, who otherwiſe would erre and ſtray like ſheep, and ſo be loſt for ever.*

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Ye were as Sheep going aſtray, &c.

THe particulars incident to this are, *firſt.* The *neceſsity* of it, impli'd in our *natural condition*, who like Sheep are of themſelves apt to erre and go aſtray. 2. The *accommodation* we have for it. For what ſhould they do which are out of the way, but return? and to whom ſhould Sheep return but to a Shepherd? and loſt Sheep, but to him that came *to ſeek and ſave that which was loſt*? and where ſhould they find ſo ſafe and ſure a retreat, as in him who purchas'd them with his own blood? All theſe are accompliſhed in our bleſſed Lord Jeſus Chriſt, whom we ſhall conſider, firſt in his *office* of Shepherd or Biſhop; then in his Flock or *Dioceſs*; the Souls of men. *We are returned*, &c.

THe firſt thing we meet with in the text, is our *natural condition*. That we were as Sheep that had gone aſtray. And the confeſſion of this is the firſt thing we meet with in our Liturgy. *We have erred and ſtray'd like loſt Sheep.* And though it were fit and neceſſary it ſhould be there, for, ſure I am, we never err'd worſe then ſince we laid that by; yet here we look upon it in another relation and uſe; it is the firſt ſtone to be laid in this

this building, in the erection of the office of a Shepherd and Biſhop. The infirmities of the Sheep are the ground of the neceſſity of a Shepherd.

But now that while we are ſpeaking of our errors, we do not commit one, we muſt know, firſt what *kind* of erring this is, and then how we fell into the fatal neceſſity of it. What it is, the Biſhop that muſt lead us out of it, will tell us; for he is the Biſhop of our ſouls: and therefore our Straying here muſt be that of the Soul. For though our natural infirmities do expoſe us to error in many things elſe, yea almoſt in all other things, even thoſe that are within the reach of ſenſe and reaſon: there is not any thing in *Nature*, in *Art*, in *Philoſophy*, though commonly received for truth, which of late time is not charged with error, and it may be ſometimes not without cauſe; yet without any great regard here, if the Soul be not concern'd.

Now if we be ſo liable to error in the things of this life, where both the end and the way to them are within the compaſs of the eye, in which we erre, as it were, in our own Countrey, where we are bred and born; we muſt

must certainly lose our way, where we are strangers, being Citizens of another Countrey, as those blessed Saints, who best knew the ways of the soul, confessed, that they were *strangers and pilgrims* here. *Heb.* 11. 14. And *they which say so, shew plainly that they seek a Countrey*, and *that a better, that is, a heavenly*, where *God hath prepared for them a City*. They must needs be disappointed that seek for Heaven upon earth, where there is nothing fitted and proportion'd to the Soul, either for the *nature* or the *desires* of it. The Soul is immortal, and cannot be provided for, where all things are liable to change and mortality; for when it shall survive them, it will be at a loss, till it find a Countrey like it self, that is everlasting and immortal.

And as the *nature*, so the *desires* of the Soul are unsatisfied here; the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing, nor the understanding with knowledg, nor the heart with the best and choicest delights of it. We are soon wearied and tir'd with what we have, and are as thirsty of that we have not. In our plenty as craving, as others in their greatest wants. The goods of this

this world are Hydropick all, *quo plus bibuntur plus ſitiuntur*. They that have the greateſt ſhare and portion in them, of Wealth, of Honour, of Power, do not ſleep the better, nor are their bodies leſs comber'd with diſeaſes, nor their minds freer from vexations and troubles. And therefore as the Saints I nam'd before, did by what they willingly ſuffer'd here, ſhew plainly that they ſought another Countrey; ſo by this is ſhewn as plainly, that they had cauſe to do ſo.

Now here lies the fatal neceſſity of erring, they ſeek a Countrey and City that is inviſible and unknown to nature, either what the *ſtate* of that Countrey is, or by what *laws* the Citizens thereof are to be govern'd. And when we walk in the dark it is not ſtrange we ſhould loſe our way.

A chief part of that way lies, *firſt* in the knowledg and *worſhip* of that God, who had prepar'd for them a City, by what Sacrifices, Rites and Ceremonies he will be ſerv'd. How much of that may be had by *nature*, we learn by thoſe, who were moſt likely to know, but did not, who were the maſters of knowledge to moſt other Nations, for of ſuch S. *Paul* ſpeaks *Rom.* 1. Who Rom. 1.

when they profess'd themselves to be wise, as well they might in many other things, yet in this of Gods worship, they became fools. For
Rom. 1. 23 they *turned the glory of the uncorruptible God, into the similitude and image of corruptible Man, and of birds, and fourfooted beasts, and of creeping things.*

The right way of worshipping God (since reveal'd to us to be by Jesus Christ) was not only unknown to them, but to those to whom God had more peculiarly imparted
Ephes. 3. 5. himself. *The mysterie of Christ Ephes. 3. 5. in other ages was not made known to the Sons of men, untill he was reveal'd unto his holy Apostles and Prophets by his Spirit.* Yea it was unknown to the very Angels, who when it was first reveal'd, in a kind of admiration and curiosity ἐπιθυμοῦσιν
1 Pet. 1. 12. παρακύψαι, *desir'd to look*, the word signifies *earnestly to pry into.* And that which the Angels of Heaven did not know, certainly the sons of men could not.

The *other* part of the way to that heavenly Countrey in which we may naturally seem to have some skill, the way of vertue, that is,
Tit. 2. 12. in the stile of Scripture, to *live godly, righteously and soberly in this present world*, appeared to the very Heathen to be the only way to happi-

happineſs. Yet theſe natural impreſſions were ſo dim and imperfect, both through Original corruption, and the over-ruling power of paſſion and luſt, that of thoſe things they knew, they held the truth in unrighteouſneſs, even to the very perverting of the courſe of nature as the Apoſtle obſerves of them in the ſame place, *Rom.* 1. Rom. 1.

Beſides, many *vertues* they knew not, which are the glory of Chriſtianity, as *Humility*, *Denying* our ſelves, Taking up the *Croß*, *Forgiving* and Loving our enemies, in their eyes looked more like follies then vertues, and ſo they would have done in ours too, if we had had no better guide then our ſelves to lead us.

By this we may ſee the neceſſity we have of Leading; let us now ſee the *accommodation* we have for it in the Leader. Our bleſſed Lord Jeſus Chriſt, a perſon every way fitted for the purpoſe, both for his skill, and good will; He knew beſt the Heavenly Countrey, whither we are going, and the way to it; for he came from thence, from the boſom of his Father. And for his good will to his own, we cannot doubt they are the Sheep which he had purchaſed with his blood, and by

that had a just title to govern in what Lordly way of Secular domination he pleased; yet chose that easie gentle way as Shepherds use to lead their Sheep. And such he professed himself to be. *I am the good Shepherd: the good Shepherd giveth his life for the Sheep,* and He made it good in every point while he was upon earth; He went about doing good, preaching the Gospel, healing the diseases of the Sheep, forgiving their sins, till he came to the last and hardest work of a good Shepherd, He laid down his life for his Sheep.

John 10.11

Yet his Pastoral care died not with him. As he was a Priest for ever; so he was a Shepherd for ever; for after he had in person ascended into Heaven, he took care for his flock that he left behind Him, that they might not be as Sheep without a Shepherd. And from thence *gave gifts unto men, some Apostles, some Prophets, some Pastors and Teachers,* &c. to continue still his Pastoral charge upon earth: and they were the same persons which before he went he had designed for it, and for the same reason that the Father sent Him, *to seek and save the Sheep that were lost*; as appears in the preamble to the commission given to the Apostles. *Mat. 9. 36. When he saw the multi-*

Ephes. 4.

Mar. 15. 24

Mat. 9. 36.

tude

tude he had compaſsion on them, becauſe they were diſperſed and ſcattered abroad like Sheep having no Shepherd. This commiſſion indeed was only to the loſt Sheep of the houſe of *Iſrael* while he was alive; but when he roſe again from the dead, He renewed and enlarged it to the loſt Sheep of all the world. *Go and teach all Nations.* Mat.28.19

And as he aſſigned the perſons, *ſicut miſit me Pater. As the Father ſent me ſo ſend I you.* Joh.20.21 He Inſtituted likewiſe the office it ſelf in all the points and parts of it.

1. *Go and teach all Nations, baptizing, &c.* Mat.28.19 there he gave the power of preaching and baptizing.

2. He commands a perpetual memorial of his death, in the Sacrament of his bleſſed body and blood. *Hoc facite, &c.* 1 Cor. 11. 24.

3. He gave them at the ſame time the power of the Keyes, *Whoſe ſins ye remit they are remitted, &c.* Joh.20.23

4. And before that in caſe of contumacy he gave power to excommunicate offenders, *If he will not hear the Church, let him be as a heathen and publican.* Mat.18.17

5. He ordered them how and what to pray. *When ye pray ſay, &c.* Mat.6.9.

6. He

6. He gave them power and jurisdiction over false Shepherds, to expel them from the flock. *Beware of false Prophets which come to you in Sheeps cloathing, but inwardly are ravening VVolves.* These and the like are the parts of the Shepherds office.

Mat. 7.19.

III. And to all these in the *third* place he gave besides a divine vertue and efficacy to work supernatural effects upon the Soul. Not only the institution, but the power also is from him. And therefore by S. *Paul* he is called the *great Shepherd*, and by S. *Peter* ἀρχιποίμην *the chief Shepherd*. The cure of Souls was originally in him, ἀρχιτεκτονικῶς, but διακονικῶς ministerially and derivatively in the Shepherds under him.

1 Pet. 5. 4.

IV. And *fourthly*, that their leading might be taken and acknowledged for his, He appointed that all should be done in His name. That they should Preach in his name, Pray in His name, Assemble together in His name, Cast out Devils in His name. And accordingly S. *Paul*, when he judg'd the incestuous *Corinthian* to be delivered unto Satan, 1 *Cor.* 5. 4. he did it *in the name and power of Christ.* And when 2 *Cor.* 5. 10. he absolved him, it was in *persona Christi.* All was His.

To

To the Apoſtles it may be all this was allowed, but not therefore to all other Shepherds after. Yes, to all that can rightly claim from Him. His promiſe was to be with them to the end of the world, that is, longer then any Apoſtle could live. I am ſure the neceſſities of the Sheep will be the ſame for ever; for Sheep we ſhall be ſtill whereſoever we are. When God diſtributed to the Church the ſeveral parts of the Paſtoral charge, *ſome Apoſtles, ſome Prophets, ſome Paſtors and Teachers*, he adds, that it was, *ad conſummationem Sanctorum, & ædificationem corporis Chriſti*; that is, ſo long as there ſhould be Saints to be perfected, and ſo long as Chriſt ſhould have a Church, a body upon earth, and that is ſo long as there ſhould be Sheep Chriſt had provided there ſhould be Shepherds. And theſe he hath taken to that nearneſs and conjunction, that the obedience or contempt done to them, he takes it as done to himſelf. *Qui vos audit me audit, &c.*

Mat. 28. 20

Ephes. 4.

The benefits and advantages we have by this are many; firſt, it is an *honour* and incouragement to the Shepherds, that the work they do is Chriſts, who will bear them out in what they do according to their duty,

and

and reward them for what they suffer for it.

2. It removes all *discouragement* from the Sheep, that make a stand at the infirmities and frailties of their Shepherds, that they look through and beyond all them at the power of Christ under whom they serve.

3. Another great benefit it is, that in all doubtful and *difficult* cases we may secure our selves upon the conduct of Christ in his Ministers. For if possibly men should be misled by them into error, when in simplicity of heart, not knowing any thing to the contrary, they shall submit to them; I dare promise them at least a favourable hearing from him that commanded the obedience.

But I dare not, nor can say that for all Shepherds; for every congregational herd hath their Shepherd too; but such as have no part in that power, which is derived from Christ and his mission; that gave it immediately to the Apostles only. *Sicut misit me Pater, sic, &c.* And all others that have it must receive it from them, or from such as derive it from them by succession. It is but reason that Christ should have the choice of his own Ministers. The Sheep that belong to those other Shepherds, can plead nothing

Joh. 20.

for

for their obedience to them. S. PAULS *obedite præpoſitis*, belongs not to them, they obey not thoſe that are ſet over them, but either thoſe that ſet themſelves over the flock, or the flock themſelves ſet them, and that not of neceſſity, which ſome vainly plead for them; but as neceſſary, profeſſing there is no lawful calling for a Miniſter, *quem non miſit populus*, where the Shepherd is not choſen by the Sheep. If theſe fall into an error by the miſguidance of their Shepherds, they are in a ſad and worſe condition, which admits no plea of excuſe or extenuation from the Shepherd. They muſt bear their own faults, and the miſguiding of the Shepherds, which they make their own by chooſing them. In a word, the favour that Chriſt doth is to his own, not the peoples Shepherds. Heb. 13. 17

II. THe next thing that falls into our conſideration is our *Duty*. To return to Chriſt the Shepherd and Biſhop of our Souls. And that is to ſubmit our ſelves to be led and guided by him. To turn to Chriſt is in effect to turn Chriſtian. We are no leſs concerned here. And that muſt be in two reſpects: in his *office* of Shepherd and Biſhop, and

in the *execution* of it by Shepherds and Biſhops.

I. For firſt, we can not be ſaid to return to him as a Shepherd, if we refuſe him in any part of his office. *The good Sheep* ſaith our
Joh.10.27. Saviour *John* 10. 27. *hear the voice of the Shepherd and they follow him.* If they turn their ears only to him, and hear him, and not follow him, they turn ſhort, for follow him they muſt through all the parts of his office. 'Tis ſo with us, who for the moſt part like nothing in the Shepherd but his pipe, and a pleaſant tune. His rod and his ſtaffe we can ſpare. The Prophet *Ezekiel* deſcribes us right, *chap.*33.
Ezek. 33. 31. an old humour it ſeems it was. *They come unto thee, And ſit before thee as my people, to hear my words, v.* 31. juſt as we do here come and ſit us down as the Lords people to hear his word.
Verſe 32. But what follows in the next verſe? *And loe thou art unto them as a very lovely ſong of one that hath a pleaſant voice, and can play well on an Inſtrument; for they hear thy words, but do them not.*

And what will come of this at the laſt, our Saviour tells us in the Parable, where ſome had the boldneſs to plead for their entrance,
Luk.13.26 that they had *eat and drunk in his preſence*, and had *heard him in their ſtreets*. *Citizens* it ſeems they were by the *ſtreets*, and by their *devotions*,

a *Sermon and a Dinner*, they eat with him, and they heard him. But what came of it? by hearing him 'tis like they knew him well; for all that, he tells them plainly, He knew not them. If the Sheep wanted nothing but knowledg, I ſhould pardon them if they deſired nothing of the Shepherd but a Sermon. But this is not that which I principally intended here.

But *ſecondly*, That our turning to Chriſt be in the full execution of his office, as in perſon, ſo by commiſſion. Princes, as well they may, think themſelves contemned in their Embaſſadors and Miniſters. And ſo doth our Saviour for his Shepherds, who are his Miniſters and Embaſſadors too. *Qui vos ſpernit me ſpernit.* II.

I ſhall not incloſe this power or favour to Biſhops only, becauſe I find that name in the text; but lay it in common to all ſuch to whom Chriſt hath committed under him the government of the Church and the cure of Souls; ſo as *Presbyterians* may have a ſhare here, when they can prove their Ordination and Miſſion.

This part of our duty to obey Chriſt in his Miniſters is with many of very hard digeſtion, who not regarding the *neceſsity* there is of it,

nor the *benefit* we have by it, nor the *authority* and commission we have for it, nor the *gentle* conduct we have in it, lay it aside as a thing of no use, and that God hath provided other means to lead us many and more certain then any Shepherds can be. We have first our own *Reason* to lead us. 2. We have *Scripture* a surer guide then that. 3. We have the
Joh. 16. 13 *Spirit* besides, and that *will lead us into all truth*. Lastly, we have our own *Consciences*, which in the commission of Leading is of the *Quorum*, nothing can be done without it.

We cannot deny but that all these have a part and share in the guiding of our souls. But as no one of them doth exclude or bar the other; so nor do all of them the Shepherds. For allowing to every of these that which is peculiar to them, there will be still found something to remain, which is proper for the Shepherds to do.

I am now, I confess, in a discourse not so smooth and easie as best befits popular Sermons; yet because many whom it concerns to weaken the hands and power of Church-governors, do with their importunate clamours fill the Pulpit, you will be pleased to allow of a short Answer from thence too.

And

AND *firſt* for REASON; It is not to be denied, that it ought to be admitted even in matters of Religion, where it hath leaſt to do; for Religion is the object and imployment of Faith, and not of *Reaſoning*, and yet naturally no man will believe any thing unleſs he ſees Reaſon for it. But how? not a Reaſon of the thing that he believes; for that works *Knowledge*, not *Faith*; but yet a reaſon of believing it, for the credit of the *Author* that relates it; for nothing can be more unreaſonable, then not to believe God that cannot ly. But to admit reaſon in matters of Faith for any other uſe then that, is to ſet up a Religion without Faith, which would be as ſtrange a thing as to have a Religion with nothing elſe. 1.

There are in Religion ſome things to be known as well as believed, and to theſe Reaſon and Diſcourſe is proper; for though the Articles of Faith, and whatſoever ſhall appear to be contained in Scripture are without all doubt and reaſoning to be received, becauſe God hath revealed them; yet that *this* or that *Article* or Propoſition is contained in Scripture, is a thing to be known, and lyes within the compaſs

compass of sense, we may see whether it be there or no, that is, for the words. And for the meaning of those words we must understand the language in which they are written, the proper import and idiom of the phrase, the force and consequence of the discourse, the coherence and consent it hath with other points better known. We must besides discover the fallacies and inconsequences of those that would obtrude a different sense from that we receive. All these difficulties, though in matter of Religion, are within the conduct of Reason; but it is Reason so *exalted* with skill of Arts and Languages, with Prudence and Diligence, that we shall be forced to find work for the Shepherds too. The greatest part of Christs flock, I am sure, must perish if they may not trust others in those things, to which their natural inabilities or course of life hath made them incapable. And for the best of the flock, whom both Nature and Art hath fitted to master the greatest difficulties of themselves; if they shall seriously consider how much and how oft Prejudice, Education, Custom, Passion and Interest doth corrupt our Reason, we would in prudence sometimes suspect our own, and

seek

ſeek better ſecurity from the *Church*; where though we ſhall not infallibly find the truth, we may alwayes ſafely preſume it. This will ſerve to reconcile our obedience with Reaſon.

THE *next* pretender againſt the Shepherds leading is the SCRIPTURE. I confeſs the *Scripture* to be a ſurer guide then Reaſon, for the *Authors* ſake; and yet, by what ye heard even now, it works little without it, but yet ſurer for all that. The ignorance of Scripture is a cauſe of erring. Ye *erre*, ſaith our Saviour, *not knowing the Scriptures*. And to keep us right in our way Gods *Word is a lantern to our feet, and a light unto our paths*. We cannot ſay too much of the excellency and benefit of it. It is a perfect record of all that concerns Heaven, or the way to it. It hath all the perfections that a *law* or rule can have to guide us; yet thoſe perfections are confin'd within the limits and nature of a law, to do no more then is proper for a law to do, which is very little without a *Judge* to apply it. Though the rule be ſufficiently ſtraight & perfect, yet it meaſures nothing out of the hand of him that hath skill to uſe it. II. Mat. 22. 29 Pſal. 119. 105.

Bring

Bring what controversy you will to the laws, they pronounce nothing either for the *Plaintiff* or *Defendant*. This is the true reason why, though all sects pretend to Scripture, there is yet no end of controversies, because there is no common *Judge* to end them. And the reason why every sect for all that seems to rest satisfied, they are guided by the *Scripture*, is because they carry their Judge a-long with them, themselves.

So as if together with the Scriptures there be not a Shepherd too, or some as little to be trusted, our selves I mean, it cannot lead at all. It is indeed a *two-edged sword*, but cuts nothing, but in the hand of him that useth it.

Heb.4.12.

III. A *Third* pretender to avoid the Shepherds is the SPIRIT. That without question will lead us into all truth. But for the manner of the *Spirits* leading, the Scripture points out two wayes, The one *Divines* call προφητικῶς, the other may be call'd συνεργετικῶς· προφητικῶς *i.e.* as it led the Prophets of old, by revealing to them the truth and matter of the Prophesy, the object. And by this way it led all the Apostles, to whom the whole doctrine

Joh.16.13.

doctrine of the Goſpel, and myſtery of ſalvation by Chriſt was reveal'd. And thus *holy men of God ſpake as they were moved by the Holy Ghoſt.* To this way of leading none can pretend, that doth not prove his commiſſion from God by a *miracle*, who ſends none of ſuch an errand that cannot make it appear ſome way, that he came from him. If the *Enthuſiaſtick* would have his dreams believed to be the dictates and revelations of the *Spirit*, let him ſhew his letters of Credence from Heaven ſeal'd with a *miracle*, and I ſhall not doubt to ſet him above all the Doctors and Shepherds of the Church. Otherwiſe he may deceive himſelf by his ſpirit, he ſhall not deceive me. 2 P. 1. 21.

The other way of the *Spirits* leading is συνεργετικῶς, *i. e.* not by *revealing* any thing to us, but by *co-operating* with us, by fortifying the ſoul and the faculties of it, to all ſupernatural actions, by aſſiſtance of grace to inlighten the underſtanding to comprehend divine truth, to inflame the affections with the love of it, to ſupport our endeavours in all difficulties and temptations. To this aſſiſtance of the Spirit all the faithful have a right. And though in this way the Spirit cannot deceive us, yet we may be deceived in it, becauſe it

never works but with us; if we fail in what we are to do, then that fails us.

And by this way not only private persons, but *publick Councels* are governed. To whom the Spirit doth not reveal the matter of their Decrees προφητικῶς, but by way of *co-operation* assists their indeavours to find out the truth from the proper Topicks of it, the Scripture and Antiquity; for so all the force of their decrees depends upon the reason and grounds upon which they are made. For if any Councel might pretend to that other way of revelation, sure that first famous *Apostolical* Councel might, *Act.* 15. But that did not otherwise determine the matter in controversy
Acts 15. 7. then πολλῆς συζητήσεως γενομένης, *v.* 7. when there had been much debate and disquisition out of the Scriptures, were the decrees made and sign'd accordingly. *It seemed good to the*
Verse 28. *Holy Ghost and to us.* The Apostles and Elders were in joynt commission with the Spirit; the same Lord that sent the Spirit, sent the Apostles also, and therefore no contradiction to be led by the Spirit, and by the Shepherds too.

IV. THE *fourth* and last leader which is brought in to avoid the Shepherds, is the

the CONSCIENCE. This is the *Presbyterians* ſtrongeſt fort againſt Obedience. If he can get his Conſcience about him, he thinks himſelf ſo ſafe that he may bid defiance to all Authority.

In the *Commiſſion* of leaders, I confeſs, as I ſaid, the Conſcience to be of the *Quorum*. We are to do nothing without it, and much leſs againſt it. But then we muſt be ſure we miſtake not ſomewhat elſe for the Conſcience. Every diſeaſe and diſtemper of the mind, cauſleſs ſcruple, ſlight perſwaſion, groundleſs fear is not the Conſcience, againſt which we are bound not to act.

The tender *Conſcience*, for which ſo much favour is pleaded, may prove in ſome no better then a diſeaſe of the Soul, a ſpiritual *Splene*. For though it be good to be tender of offending God in any thing where it proceeds from the good temper and conſtitution of the ſoul, which is the ſame conſtantly in all caſes, and is not affected or taken up for a purpoſe, as the ſturdy begger carries his arm in a ſtring, that it may be a Patent to beg and be idle.

You may know it certainly to be a diſeaſe if it comes upon us by fits and ſtarts, as to be *tender* of offending God when we obey men,

and *not* to be *tender* of offending God when we disobey them. If they be not as tender of one side as of another, as I never find them to be, it is but a *Paralitick* Conscience that is dead of one side. For tell him the Church commands it, he presently shrinks and startles at it; and well so, for possibly he may sin against God. But tell him on the other side that God commands obedience to those that rule over us, it moves him not at all, you may thrust a needle into his side and he feels it not. It shews plainly the Conscience hath a dead Palsy on that side.

But a right and sound Conscience against which certainly we ought not to act, is a constant and well governed judgment; for not to amuse you as the manner is with frivolous distinctions and *definitions* of Conscience, in this case the Conscience is nothing but every mans *private* judgment; for he ought not to attempt the doing of any thing, till he hath framed this judgment to himself, that it is lawful for him to do it. Now seeing our private judgment hath so great power and influence as to interrupt the course of publick, it had need be a true and regular judgment. As first,

It muſt not be *arbitrary*, for that we think we have reaſon to decline in the publick Magiſtrate, to govern by Will and not by Law. Many a Conſcience if it were well examined, will prove to be nothing but will, not judgement. I.

Every good judgment is upon a *full* hearing of the cauſe of both ſides, all evidences duly weighed and examined, then reſolves; this is a Conſcience againſt which we ought not to act, though poſſibly it might prove to be erroneous; yet for all that we muſt know that it doth not ſet us free from the guilt of diſobeying our Governors. And then this is all the benefit our Conſcience will do us in caſe of error, that it caſts us into a *neceſſity* of ſinning, by obeying againſt our ſelves, by diſobeying againſt our Governors. We ſhall do well therefore to take care, that we make not every ſlight perſwaſion, doubt or ſcruple, a Conſcience, truſting to be diſcharged of our obedience by that, which indeed binds it faſter upon us, for that is the very end and benefit for which is inſtituted the Paſtoral charge, that when we are ſo weak we can not ſafely truſt our ſelves, we may rely upon that: unleſs we think it a good plea, I am II.

blind

blind and therefore I will *not* be led. I am weak and sickly, and therefore I will *not* be rul'd by the Physitian.

Now to sum up all, if not *Reason*, nor *Scripture*, nor the *Spirit*, nor *Conscience* will discharge us of the duty we owe to the Church, in the name of God, let us not rashly fling away so great a blessing, that in all our doubts and fears, for our quiet and security, we may have recourse to the Shepherds and Bishops of our Souls.

THis is the *last* point, the Shepherds Flock or the Bishops *Dioceß*: the Souls of men. And here we meet with another quarrel from the *Presbytery*. That they may be sure to spoil the Bishops of all authority, they take away their Dioceses, the cure of Souls, that they may be Bishops *sine titulo*; for Bishops they are not either of our bodies or estates. And why not of our Souls? Christ indeed the great Shepherd that purchased them may rule them, but they are too precious for any other Shepherds to Lord over: which they say is done by binding the Souls with *Church-laws* and censures, which Christ hath set at liberty. And thus they set up Christ

Chriſt *againſt* himſelf, and Chriſtian liberty againſt Chriſtian duty.

S. *Paul*, I confeſs doth earneſtly preſs this point of liberty, *Stand faſt in the liberty where-with Chriſt hath made us free, and be not intangled again with the yoak of bondage.* Gal. 5. 1. But what liberty? It is not ſimply from obedience either to men or Laws, for that were deſtructive to Humane Society as well as Religion. What then is it? It is no more then that Chriſtians have a liberty *not* to be Jews. I dare be bold to ſay, this is all that can be made of it. And the reaſon why S. *Paul* did ſo earneſtly preſs it is evident. The Jews that were willing enough to entertain the doctrine of Chriſt, yet were not ſo eaſily drawn to part with thoſe Rites and Ceremonies, to which they had been ſo long accuſtomed, and upon ſo good authority. To humour theſe *Simon Magus* and his Diſciples ſet up a medly of both Religions, that they might be *Chriſts* Diſciples and *Moſes* too. Againſt this doctrine S. *Paul* ſets himſelf, eſpecially in his Epiſtles to the *Romans* and *Galatians*. If they have taken upon them to be Chriſtians let them ſtand to that, and not look back again to the fleſh *having begun in the Spirit.* Gal. 3. 3. For behold, I *Paul ſay unto you, if*

ye

Gal. 5. 2. *ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing.* To claim from hence liberty from any other men or laws then the Jews, they might as well say Christ hath here given them liberty not to be Christians. For Christians we cannot be, unless we obey the Laws and Government of those that Christ hath set over us. To use our liberty in this case our Apostle in the 16. *verse* of this *Chap.* hath adjudged it to be no 1 Pet. 2. better then a *cloak of maliciousness.*

And for those Consciences which are so tender that every Church-law pinches and galls them, they do without reluctance *bind* their own Souls. Every private man can do that which we will not indure the Church should do. He that promiseth any thing is bound in conscience to perform it, though before he took that bond upon him, he had his Christian liberty not to do it. Before *Ananias* promised to sell his estate, and give it to the Church, he was free, S. *Peter* told him so; *Was it not* Acts 5. 4. *in thine own power?* Yet after that it was not in his power to make use of that liberty; for his conscience was bound. And if a promise may do this, much more a vow or an oath. Num. 30. 2. *If a man vow a vow unto the Lord, or swear an oath to bind his Soul,* Numb. 30. 2. (the Soul may

may be bound) *he ſhall not break his word, he ſhall do according to all that proceedeth out of his mouth.*

If a man ſhould be ſo unreaſonable as to ſay, his conſcience may be bound by himſelf, but not by any elſe. Do not they themſelves, as their manner is in their Sermons, *bind* over their hearers to anſwer for them at the day of judgment? and what a heap and load of Sermons muſt then ly upon their Conſciences? though the truth is, they bind none but themſelves, and that to repent for corrupting Gods Word, and miſleading the people into Faction, Sedition and Diſobedience, to ſay no worſe.

Let us ſeriouſly conſider and *compare* that which they would avoid, with that which they indeavour to ſet up in the room of it. They would avoid *firſt* the power of the Church in her Laws and Cenſures as a domineering over mens conſciences, and a lording it over Gods inheritance. But if they look upon it with an impartial eye, they ſhall find all contrary, nothing but moderation; as firſt in the very ſtile of the Church, that there might be no *harſh* words. The laws by which they govern, are not call'd laws but *canons*,

that is, rules to guide, rather then force. 2. Church-punishments are not call'd *pœnæ* but *censuræ*, not that they are sweetned with good words only, but with real benefit; for they are not as temporal punishments *ad vindictam* but *ad disciplinam*, for the amendment, not revenge of sin. 3. The temporal judge, if not Soveraign, *cannot* pardon the *felony* though he would. The Ecclesiastical judge cannot *but pardon* though he would not. *Ecclesia non claudit gremium redeuntibus*, is a rule in the Court Christian. The Church refuseth none that will return and repent. There is *no* such rule in secular Courts, that the thief or murtherer upon repentance may be pardoned. And by *Church-Canons* in elder times it was deemed an irregularity to be present at a sentence of blood. Not that it is a crime to be so, but as the Canon speaks, *propter defectum lenitatis*, that nothing in them might seem to be of harshness or cruelty. The highest and most terrible of all Church-censures, of which men seem to be most impatient, how harmless and gentle is it, *Excommunication*? If he be not guilty, *clavibus errantibus*, he is never the worse for it; the bonds fall off themselves; if he be

be guilty, he may be the better for it if he will. When S. *Paul* judged the inceſtuous *Corinthian* to be delivered unto Satan, and this was thought to be Excommunication and ſomewhat more; yet this was for his benefit, for *the deſtruction of the fleſh, that the ſpirit might be ſaved in the day of our Lord Jeſus*, verſe 5. What is there in all this that ſhould fright us from our obedience? 1 Cor. 1. 3. Verſe 5.

But now let us ſee what on the other ſide they would ſet up in the room of this. A *liberty* of *Conſcience*, forſooth, from the fetters of laws, that they might not ſerve God in bonds like ſlaves, but freely. That they may preach what they will, and as long as they will. That they may pray how they will, and faſt when they will. That they may ſtand and kneel where and when they will. Indeed a true arbitrary *Will-worſhip*; inſtead of a lawful orderly ſerving of God, a confuſion of all.

But they hold themſelves wrong'd to be charged with will-worſhip, for that they do all by *Reaſon* and the *Scripture* and the *Spirit*. Yet for all that pretenſe they are ſtill under that charge; becauſe all theſe are at their own wills; what ſectary is there that with a wet finger cannot, nay doth not challenge Rea-

son, the Scripture, the Spirit and Conscience to be for him, when *he will*?

And why do they allow these to guide them and not the Shepherds, but because these are at their beck and *will*, but the Shepherds are not? And therefore because they cannot command them, they would be rid of them, that so they might without control, Lord it as they will.

But I shall trouble you no longer with our *Shepherds* or their *Adversaries*, but for a conclusion and caution reflect upon our selves: for though Christ hath committed the cure of our souls to others, he hath not taken it from our selves. The Shepherds were given for a help to ease us in it, not to ease us of it. Every one may and must be by a concurrent care a Shepherd and Bishop to himself; and then here I shall take leave only to put you in mind of your Dioceſs, your *Souls*, that ye be not our Apostles ἀλλοτριοεπίσκοποι in this Epistle, that we mistake not our Cure; for there be other things we have as great affection for as our Souls, I wish we had not. The rich glutton in the Gospel, when he said to his Soul, *Soul take thine ease, thou hast much goods laid up for thee*, &c. sure he mistook his

1 Pet. 4. 15

Luk. 12. 19

body

body for his Soul, for there was nothing in his barns that could feed that. This is no greater an error and miſtake then we dayly commit our ſelves; to go no farther then this preſent time. *Lent*, if there were any thing left of it among us but the name, charges the ſoul by prayer and faſting to fit and prepare it ſelf to meet our Lord at the Reſurrection. When we plead our conſtitution and health againſt it, it ſhews we are no ill *Curates* of our bodies, whatſoever we be of our ſouls.

Yea that which hath a better title to be our ſouls will not lie within this Cure; the *intellectual* and principal part of the ſoul, and the inriching it with the knowledge of Arts and Sciences, ſpeculative and practick, by which all our affairs and the greateſt of all the affairs of the world are governed, which employ the ſouls beſt vertues and indowments, and for which none but great and noble ſouls are fit. Yet this is not the ſoul for which Chriſt died, and is to be our Cure. For when we have gained this and all the world beſides we may *loſe our ſouls*. The Holy Ghoſt takes no other notice of theſe then as if they were but bodies, and

indeed

indeed for their continuance they are no better, for they perish with our bodies; the greatest *wits* and wisest *conduct* lie buried in their dust with them, nor will they appear again for us in that world where the soul is most concern'd. In a word, the Scripture owns no losing or saving to the soul but in that condition which must live and continue for ever. Nothing is worthy that name that is not immortal. Yet I must recal my self when I said these mortal souls, that is, in their temporal condition, are not within our Cure; to get, it may be not, but to use they are. The meanest of them all our Saviour expressly commits to our charge, *Make you friends of unrighteous Mammon, that they may receive you into everlasting habitations.* Things everlasting are proper for the soul. And if you shall make you friends likewise of your *honours*, *powers*, and *knowledge*, for the advantage of Gods honour and service, certainly they will do as much for you as *Mammon* can. For thus these mortals do put on immortality, these corruptibles do put on incorruption. You may in this sense make a soul out of your bodies

Luk. 16. 9.

1 Cor. 15. 54.

bodies by the chaſt, ſober and temperate uſe of them. And ſo our bodies and all elſe become the proper Cure of our ſouls, and in the diſcharge of that care, we may expect the bleſſing of good Shepherds as well as that of good Sheep. And *when the chief Shepherd ſhall appear, ye ſhall receive a crown of Glory that fadeth not away.* 1 Pet. 5. 4.